194 Tones appear to be lacking in a few members of the family, notably in the generally archaic West Tibetan dialects (Balti and Purik), hence only a tendency to develop tonal systems rather than a tonal system itself can definitely be postulated for the parent speech. Monosyllabic roots, however, of the type *k'wi "dog", *mig "eye", *ni "sun, day", are of absolute diagnostic value. The phonemic scheme of the parent language seems to have been relatively simple. The stop and affricate series included both aspirated and unaspirated surds and at least one sonant member. To these were added four nasals (ng, ń, n, m), probably four sibilants (s, z, š, ž), the liquids l and r, and consonantal y, w, and h. The final consonants, however, were limited to -g, -d, -b; -ng, -n, -m; -r, -l, and probably -s. Initial consonantal clusters were restricted to combinations of stops, affricates, sibilants, or nasals + r, l, or y, e.g. kl-, mr-, py-, but prefixed groupings complicated the anlaut in many roots, making possible forms such as Tib. brgyad "8". The vocalic system included a, i, and u, probably with a simple "long" vs. "short" quantitative distinction, and e and o, which seem secondary in many instances. The parent language also had diphthongs both of rising type, e.g. wa (u̯a), wi (u̯i), and of falling type, e.g. au̯, ei̯, the latter type appearing only in final position, as in *ts'au̯ "fat", *mei̯ "fire".

193 On the morphological side the parent Tibeto-Burman speech showed almost as great simplicity. It was primarily a prefixing language with isolating characteristics and a